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ABSTRACT

The challenge of educating learners from limited-income families, combined with the challenge of racial integration in the schools, is discussed in this essay. Some learning problems among impoverished children are attributed to segregation, prejudice, and the class-caste system. The inadequacies of segregated schools serving minority groups as compared to those serving the majority group are outlined with reference to funding and teacher role. Problems which teachers and low-income learners face in desegregated situations are described. Methods of judging achievement and of testing intelligence are evaluated in terms of their relation to teacher, parent and social bias. The use of multicultural curriculum and cross-racial personnel assignment are suggested in order to eliminate racism and racist attitudes in the schools. Educational problems of white learners from limited income families are analyzed. It is stated that a greater awareness of the elements of teacher responsibility in schools attempting racial integration contributes to a more effective and more functional school experience for all. It is concluded that once schools are desegregated, most of educations' energies must go toward maintaining racial integration and the productive teaching of children from limited income families. (WI)

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Racial Integration And Learners From Limited Income Families

—An Essay for American Educators—

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"Racial integration in American schools in another step in dismantling the caste system which continues to paralize the social and academic growth of America's children."
--J.B.B.

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RACIAL INTEGRATION AND LEARNERS FROM LIMITED-INCOME FAMILIES

(An Essay for Educators)

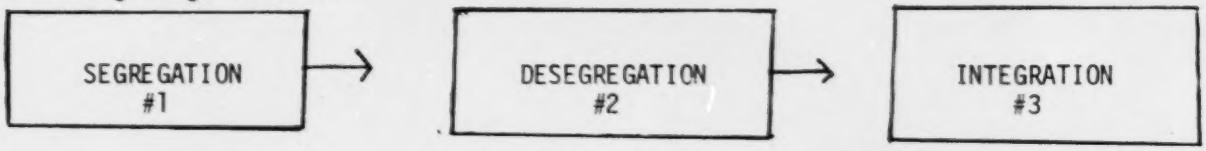
The challenge of educating learners from limited-income families continue to be a part of American schooling and those educators who are genuinely concerned with educating all the children of all the people are constantly seeking strengths to meet the challenges. The combined challenge of racial integration and instructional services to children from limited-income families requires that we analyze the totality of teaching and learning within a social structure such as we know in America today.

Cross-racial teaching and learning will become more and more a reality for American educators than ever before. Racial diversity in this country has so often meant economic diversity and this discussion of learners (children) from limited-income families will focus on the nature and complexities of the challenge. Whenever teachers and learners are of different racial or ethnic identities, then all interactions (teaching and learning) take on new dimensions. We still do not know enough about each other cross-racially-- to discount the new dimensions. What are the areas of such complexity? What are the factors contributing to the dimensions? What are the operating definitions of these concepts? How can I function as a modern educator considering all the changes and developments regarding families of limited-income? and regarding racial/ethnic integration?

Toward Racial Integration

The racial identity of human beings in this country has always been a major factor. All of our economic, political, social and educational decisions have somehow been influenced by racial factors. Our first task, however, was to move from segregation to desegregation. That move is still underway.

Ultimately, however, it will lead to a racially integrated society and the schools will reflect that level of interaction at some point. Racial integration is a far more complex and sustaining concept than desegregation as well be discussed later. The national movement toward social reconstruction, however, is in several stages and racial integration, hopefully, will someday result from the long-range efforts.



Understanding (by educators) that the entire economic, political, social and educational structure of our country has been required to deal with these concepts-- will enable us to find workable solutions to instructional challenges.

Learners from Limited-Income Families

Our reference to learners from limited-income families includes those whose family income is considerably limited when compared to most other families in America--or in a given locality. They are children who come from economically poor homes and whose lifestyles differ markedly because of factors associated with family income. Most families in America may be defined as being of limited income, but our refererce is to those families commonly considered more limited (economically) than the majority of families in the American economy. Additionally, many have come from families who are recipients of public welfare assistance and from families who would be declared impoverished by government standards at any given time.

The limitation here is specifically an economic limitation. There is no implication that these learners do not bring strengths to the American school. It is felt that many strengths and capacities are found in the population of students from economically-limited families. Instructional creativity has yet

to find and utilize most of these strengths and capacities, however.

Learners from limited-income families may be Black, White, or may represent any of the ethnic or racial identities populating the public schools of the United States. Economic limitations (poverty) know no color line or ethnic line. They are among the children of all the people.

The concept of desegregation describes the social process which brings out the physical arrangement of people representing racial and ethnic differences so that they are located together in a setting which provides for greater social interaction due to the physical setting. In other words, school desegregation is basically a physical arrangement of learners in the same learning group (school and class) even though they may be racially or ethnically different from each other. The concept further extends to the teaching and non-teaching staff of the school whereby persons of different races are assigned employment roles which would bring them into the same physical setting for the discharge of their employment responsibilities in schools.

School desegregation in America has always caused much concern among all sectors of economic and social classes. By contrast, however, racial integration is a different and much broader term which involves the social acceptance by persons of one racial or ethnic group of persons who are different from themselves. It is the process through which possible conflicting units tend to harmonize and unify within the school setting. Considered to be a more advanced social process than desegregation, it includes critical variables of respect, understanding and acceptance of human beings on an equal basis. Integration, then, is more complex than desegregation and often necessitates changing values, attitudes and patterns of behavior. Despite the fact that newspapers, commentators, and others of the press use the terms interchangeably, they are not one and the same.

Segregation is the state of being separated or set apart from others on the basis of race or ethnic group. While this may be the result of law and/or social custom, it is a condition that tends to exclude or minimize association between racially different groups. This absent or minimized association restricts the relationships that do occur to subordinate--superordinate roles and increases

the probability of fear and misunderstanding of people who are different from one's self.

The ultimate goal of desegregation is integration, but far too few teachers understand the basic difference between the two concepts and many are either unaware that they must work especially to achieve integration, or they are unwilling to accept that as their primary objective in the educative process in recently desegregated school systems. Whether we understand it or not, teachers are engaged in a social service based on prevailing definitions of American education.

Learning problems associated with learners from limited income families have reached a level of complexity never before imagined or presumed and massive efforts are now being made to discover and eliminate the accompanying causes of the ills which result in learning difficulty. Solutions to these problems require detailed analysis and carefully developed approaches to remediation. Not only are we faced with the specific cognitive learning problems in these settings, but also with concurrent problems growing out of the compilation of factors associated with housing, employment, social experiences, low-income, geographic isolation, economic activity and political awareness.

Segregation, in all its forms, has been found to be a major cause of some of the learning problems which exist in impoverished settings. But segregation produced the seeds from which our most devastating civil disorders grew and when America analyzed and studied these disorders, more intensive efforts to desegregate the schools were initiated. Because we see the curriculum as embodying the impressions, perceptions, relationships and interactions of the school and the societal populace, we see the impact of desegregation as a major part of the curriculum for learners, both from families of limited income and from others.

What is the relationship between desegregation and the limited-income learners? To begin with, most of America operated on a traditional unwritten philosophy that Caucasian owners of property (plantation owners in the early days of this country) would form the preferred social class, that poor white persons (those who did not own any property) would form the second social class, and that Black people would automatically form the third and lowest social group. From the beginning, the perceptions of social class had direct relationship to economic levels and, in time, solidified countless ideas, customs, practices and beliefs by which many people lived. There is still much concern for status among Americans and many teachers tend to be more concerned about their social status than about the quality and quantity of their professional services to learners.

Many distorted perceptions of the limited-income learner persist in the minds of parents, teachers and learners and the practice of segregation served to perpetuate these distortions. More than any other factor, the class-caste system within our society has experienced the beginning of destruction with the coming of racial desegregation in our schools. Even though many citizens are committed to the preservation of racially-autonomous schools and a totally segregated society, one must understand the rationale on which this commitment rests.

Why Would People Want Racially-Segregated Schools?

Despite the fact that America likes to maintain control of its schools and criticizes much of what the schools do in instructional programs, it is difficult to find a thinking person who would denounce the impact of the American school, particularly the public school. Without a doubt, the school is the great equalizer in our society. The system of racial segregation was a political vehicle, an economic vehicle, and a social vehicle through which many people could maintain

their self-perceived status. Further, many people considered society's arrangement for school matters to be quite adequate and appropriate since it served to meet their needs and to nurture their way of life. So people were afraid of desegregation and considered it a "threat" to societal positions. Some others found it distasteful because they felt it would disrupt the economic system. Still others were (unjustifiably--in our judgment) overly concerned with interracial dating, courtship, and marriage.

One of the most emotion-packed charges in opposition to achieving racial balance in the schools involved the transportation of learners by bus to schools within the district for this purpose. Several questions must be raised in reply to these charges. Does any research show that transported learners ever suffered academically as a result of this transportation? How many districts in the country provided some form of school transportation prior to the most recent mandates for racial balance in the schools? To those who are concerned about the costs of such transportation, we ask if costs were a factor all those years when pupils were transported for the expressed purpose of achieving and maintaining racial separation? In case after case, both Black and white children were transported past the schools nearest their homes in order to attend racially segregated schools. Those persons who are most vocal in their opposition to transportation for the purpose of racial balance now were never heard during all the years in which the purpose of bus transportation was the maintenance of learners by racial identification. Where were these opponents then?

The real issue is not the "bussing of students," but the purposes for which they are "bussed" and the ultimate goals to be achieved. To emphasize a technique for achieving a goal rather than the goal suggests a pre-occupation with means rather than ends. Is this where our concern should lie?

A Historical Perception

But more than the present-day concerns with racial desegregation is the philosophical basis upon which America functioned when concerned with Black people and other minorities from the beginning. The same men who helped to compose the document which says that "all men are created equal," were slave owners at the time the statement was drawn up. But the Black slaves were not considered men but were thought of as property and perceived as support for maintaining an economic position.

Additionally, state constitutions implied that schools were for freedmen and made it illegal to educate Black people. Following the Civil War, however, many such restrictions were to be lifted as war duty required that slave soldiers possess the skills of reading and writing. But it wasn't until 1896 that the decision to maintain "separate but equal" schools was reached. Many states maintained, through constitutional provisions, separate school systems for Blacks and Whites but in 1899, legislative action provided that if states could not financially maintain both systems, the schools for Black children could be closed and the ones for White children retained with available funds. Thus, the Black learners would be deprived of any education at all.

The very foundation of racial segregation invited discrimination. When schools were specified on the basis of race, many inconsistencies were tolerated at all levels and few people, other than those directly affected adversely, seemed to be very much concerned.

The Inconsistencies

Prior to desegregated school operation, the learner from the limited-income family who also happened to be Black was assigned to schools where funds were allocated through a different system than the one used where other pupils were

enrolled. How was this done? First, Black teachers were assigned to teach only Black learners and in many states, there was a published separate salary schedule for Black teachers which indicated salaries considerably lower than the one for Caucasian teachers with the same or equivalent degrees, and who held teaching certificates from the same State certifying agency. Such practices by School Boards and Chief Administrators were not thought to be discriminatory by those engaged in the practice, but apparently many others were more aware because when the possibility of assigning children other than Black children to those same schools, there was much dissatisfaction and overty opposition.

Secondly, no real comparison can be made between the quality of schools unless it is made on the basis of <u>funds spent per-pupil-enrolled</u> along with other factors. Some educators and economists would take issue with this position but the very nature of budgetary decisions reflect a value system which is dominant in our society. It is no secret that under racial segregation, schools serving Black learners were decidedly under-equipped, often under-staffed, and the staffs were frequently under-paid. Further, it was the general practice in some areas to issue out-dated textbooks (having been used as much as five or more years by White learners) to those schools serving Black learners. Rarely, in those instances, did any new books or newly adopted books get distributed to the schools serving limited-income Black learners.

Beyond the elementary and secondary level, the system of segregation had still further inconsistencies in its operation. Even at graduate school level, some states granted funds called "out-of-state" aid to Black graduate students who would attend graduate school in those states who would accept them if they were interested in a field of study not provided by Black graduate programs in their home state. All these are but samples of the kinds of practices which prevailed under segregation which are intolerable under desegregated programs of education

leading toward racial integration. Further, in the allocation of funds for equipment, programs of studies, and professional staff, it is very difficult to maintain these inconsistencies if all the children are generally represented in all the schools. Again, the American school is the great equalizer and it cannot be overemphasized that part of the reason for limited ideas and much misunderstanding in our society lies in the lack of contact, in one's growing years, with people who are different from one's self.

What About the Teachers?

The teachers in the segregated school systems were, more frequently than not, proponents and supporters of the segregated plan of operation. Even today, many Black teachers are unwilling to teach learners who are not Black and many White teachers are also unwilling to teach learners who are not White. The reasons for the two groups differ greatly but the fact is that the preference is to teach in those situations where the teacher and learner are of the same racial or ethnic identification. Most of the reasons grow out of the teacher's value system and orientation to life, as many were taught that the social system, as it was, was to be carefully preserved. Further, such a system tends to provide a false security of economic and social positions.

With the onset of racial desegregation, teachers were called upon to initiate a complete examination of their behaviors, beliefs, attitudes and values. This examination (or re-examination) forces the teacher into an analysis of his or her role as a teacher per se. What is the role of the teacher? What should be his or her primary concern in the relationships with learners? What should be the major function of the curriculum? What does the teacher perceive the primary goal of education to be? To what extent is the teacher responsible for the

clarity and quality of perceptions which a limited-income learnerhas on leaving the class? Questions such as these cannot be answered in the textbooks or in the curriculum guides provided by most school districts. Teachers have to look within themselves to begin such an analysis.

Is the movement toward racial integration so all-encompassing? Yes it is. Its implementation necessitates the examination and possible elimination of long-standing stereotypes (ideas) which served all kinds of purposes to those who shared them deeply. It also necessitates the disclosure and diagnosis of many functionally-ingrained prejuidices (attitudes) and its very nature challenges some discriminatory practices (treatment) employed in every facet of school operation. It challenges the philosophical bases upon which many decisions rested and it invites more valid interpretation of pedagogical procedure.

The successful teacher in racially desegregated situations must eliminate a quest for status so completely that he or she is free to function in a productive manner with diverse students. For example, one teacher in a recently desegregated district approached a college professor and said, "Professor X, I would like your help with references on ghetto learners. You see, I teach in the ghetto not because I have to--but because I want to. My social position is as secure as any woman's in this city." Here was a concrete example of the erroneous assumption that the assignment to teach urban learners from low-income families was consistent with a declining or lowered social position in society. Further her primary concern was not with the services to her clients, but with the maintenance of her social position. Such a perception is crucially detrimental to teaching and learning in racially desegregated settings, and especially does it fail to enhance learning with the poor. How can such a distorted interpretation of professional services be held? Where did the teacher's commitment lie? To what ends does she teach? How recently did she stop to question her own motives

within her career? Far too many teachers still labor under such fallacious assumptions. The impact of moves toward racial integration threatens the very fibre of many such motives.

What About Low-Income Learners? (Black and White)?

Under desegregated systems, the low income learner faces a new challenge and is required to undergo an adjustment period which may actually be painful at some points. But young learners tend to recover from the trauma of adjustment more quickly than most adults. We know that the impressions, perceptions and nature of experiences which the child has determines much about his or her success or failure in the school's program, but that does not suggest that the low-income learner fails to profit academically from his involvement in desegregated school programs. Additionally, learners usually relate to each other on the basis of the emotional tone set by the teacher. Even in racially-mixed classes, learners have a tendency to seek teacher direction and teacher approval on the quality of social relationships to be maintained. When the class or learning group includes learners who are economically different as well as racially and ethnically different, the teacher has a golden opportunity to teach respect and acceptance through his or her own behavior with individual learners as well as with the group.

Learners from limited-income families are among America's most sensitive learners in their responses to teacher behavior and instructional effort. That is, everything they learn or fail to learn is in relation to their perception of the teacher's concept of them. We repeat that the highest quality of human relations skills is needed for the successfuly teacher of the economically-poor learner. In other words, the teacher's openness, honesty, and forthrightness become major factors in the learner's evaluation of the teacher. Further, these qualities manifest themselves in improved academic achievement by the learners

in most situations.

Achievement and Racial Integration

One of the more prominent myths held by many school people and others is that under desegregation, and its move toward integration, the achievement of higher-achieving children will suffer academically. This assumption has no basis in fact. Much of the research showed that White children's achievement has never suffered as a result of racial desegregation while the achievement of Black children improved in the vast majority of instances.

Achievement, however, is much more aligned with the views and performance of the teacher than it is with many other factors. Those teachers who view learning difficulties as emanating from sources outside the domain of the school usually approach the teaching task with futility. That is, they see their efforts as incapable of yielding improved achievement and resign themselves to "waiting" for the economic conditions to change or for entities outside the school to solve the learner's school problems. Contrastingly, those teachers who view their professional efforts in instructing limited-income learners as having direct positive impact on the alleviation of academic difficulties usually enhance significantly improved achievement.

This discussion is not to suggest that the impact of peer influence on achievement should be de-emphasized but many factors contribute to the academic development of learners in all school settings. Which of these account for the improved achievement of low-income learners in desegregated situations? One significant fact is the gradual elimination of the feeling of separation, rejection, social ostracism, and restriction which the segregated low-income learner feels so strongly. Further, there is often the feeling that one has absolutely no control of his or her academic destiny and no part in the determination of the future. That "closed in" feeling also breeds frustration and the

frustrated learner does not achieve satisfactorily.

The social relationships which develop among learners in racially desegregated schools are frequently positive and the learners speak glowingly of the friendships developed. Part of the difficulty in desegregation rests in adult apprehensions about the durability of the unexamined teachings which they pass to their offspring. For instance, a Black parent, could tell his first grade son in a desegregated school to stay away from White children, to stay away from all White people because they are racists and because they all dislike Black people. The teachings could continue in such a strong vein that the child continues to build a rather confusing idea about White people, because at the time the parent is encouraging him to refrain from playing with Johnny, who is his white classmate, the child is observing Johnny's behavior from his own frame of reference. The admonitions to the first grader continue into second grade because adult experience has let the parent to such a belief. Whether these prejudices are based on fact or not has not been an issue with the parent but the indoctrination continues. If this continues and the Black learner retains a healthy, warm personal relationship with his young White classmate, eventually, he's going to say, "No, no, Daddy, you're wrong because I've been sitting next to Johnny in school for nearly three years and none of the things you told me about him have been true."

When the child reaches a conclusion about people who are racially or ethnically different from himself, and this conclusion is based on his personal experience with the different person, parental biases and prejudices are openly challenged. This is both threatening and perplexing. A great deal of the fear, apprehension, opposition and rejection of racially desegregated schooling rests in this kind of factor. Where the social groups are more rigidly defined, the quest for racial integrated provides a major trauma. Not all opposition to desegregation rests in

this kind of framework, but the 1) issue of social status, 2) the perpetuation of social myths and 3) retention of deeply ingrained prejudices are at the bottom of many opposing positions regarding interracial schooling.

Perspectives on Testing

Achievement, however, seems to be a more valid index on which to design or arrange learning activities than ability testing--if either had to be used. Far too often, ability test scores have been used improperly by teachers who work with limited-income learners. This improper use entails the establishment of an attitude that failure is expected for the economically disadvantaged learner. Such deep faith is placed in some test scores which yield distorted views of learner potential that much damage is done by teachers in failing to release this potential. Given new, relevant, interesting, and challenging experiences, the potential for intellectual functioning on the part of the limited-income learner increases tremendously. Not all low-income learners perform poorly on achievement tests. In some of the most impoverished communities, some learners function at very high intellectual levels. There are also examples of low-income children whose test scores (both achievement and aptitude) indicate that they will perform very poorly on class tasks but they display amazing levels of competency in the class.

Because some school districts were using aptitude tests to further employ discriminatory practices in school work, the National Association of Black Psychologists recommended to the American Psychological Association that a moratorium be declared on the use of intelligence and ability tests with children from minority group backgrounds. A variety of academically-approved techniques had been called into employment by those whose motives reflected rejection of minority group learners and some school districts have discontinued the use of traditional intelligence tests with their pupils because teachers misused the

results and placed too little faith in the academic potential of the learners.

The concept of testing is one way of assessing the effectiveness of an educational program for learners but the alert, productive and creative educator remembers that there are many other variables which are highly significant in determining the total impact of the teaching-learning process. Evaluation involves a variety of objective and subjective judgments by the professional educator. The skill employed in reaching these judgments in interracial schooling should be of the highest quality known in the profession.

Can the Curriculum Reflect Interracial Schooling?

Indeed it can. Even the casual observer can note that a large percentage of all state-adopted text materials and supplementary books in America are guilty of the omission of contributions to the content which reflect a pluralistic society. Writers and producers of textbooks have failed to provide the learner with realistic views of his world by the exclusion of content with which minority group learners can identify. This omission also denies the opportunity for the development of positive self-concept. But until rather recently, most textbooks were written and compiled by people who did not represent minority groups and who did not share the realities of life as a Black American or a Brown American. The white-oriented content of textbooks further enhanced the assumption held by so many that White people are superior to all other people and that success in America is synonymous with becoming "as white as possible." It should be emphasized here that the curriculum is not limited to textbooks and supplementary volumes but it is in the things of the mind that really make a difference in one's life. What a learner reads, interprets, and studies in school does have its effect on him, but not nearly so much effect as does his teacher.

But the very nature of curricular materials provided for disadvantaged learners has been instrumental in creating in the minority group child a sense

of worthlessness, powerlessness, inferiority, and rejection. At the same time, it has attempted to give the more advantaged learner a false sense of white supremacy. For example, until very recently, whenever instructional films were made, the casts were usually mono-ethnic and whenever photographs of people were included in textbooks, few, if any, minority groups were represented. More importantly, the tenor of life for Black of Brown America was not considered appropriate for textbook or instructional materials inclusions. Thus, minorities in this country were "invisible" and school systems perpetuated this "invisibility" by their failure to effect a change, or to supplement those materials with more appropriate ones.

The program of studies tended also to be reflective of a mono-cultural approach while these same materials were intended for Indian children, Mexican-American children, Puerto Rican children, Black children, Chinese children, and a host of others who comprise the school population in America. Such practices (by the process of exclusion) have supported the opinion that things associated with the minority cultures are diseased, primitive, evil and sometimes vulgar, while the materials which the schools elected to provide communicated virtue, beauty, and the characteristic of being worthy of emulation by all.

This silent indoctrination has taken its toll on both Black and white learners as well as others. (Because those who label people in this country by race usually consider all people to be white except those who are Black (in ethnic identification), much of our discussion is collectively described in terms of Black and White people.) As long as the nature of curriculum content and the treatment of this content excludes minorities and the cultural contributions of minorities, schooling will be viewed as irrelevant for the masses. Not only do minorities need to have the school offer a multi-cultural curriculum, but White learners also need help in understanding the multi-cultural character of our

country. Until all learners are treated to the academic explorations of multi-cultural curriculum materials, they will be unable to really conceive of minority learners as their equal and as persons with capabilities, entitled to the inalienable rights of all men. Minorities particularly need to see representatives of their ethnic group in policy-making and administrative positions as well as in other cultural pursuits so that we can reinforce their sense of worth, contribution, and belonging in our society. To do less would eliminate a golden opportunity to bring about academic relevance.

Racism and the Schools

Racism is described as a belief that race is the primary determinant of human traits and capacities and that racial differences produce an inherent superiority or inferiority of a particular race. We have substantial empirical data to support the fact that human beings behave and function on the basis of their beliefs and value systems. When these beliefs are framed within the assumption of inherent superiority of one race over another, then the behavior of the individual is likely to reflect such a belief and will restrict the activities and decisions accordingly. Racism is perhaps one of the strongest deterrents to productive teaching (in interracial settings) known to man because it restricts both teacher and learner in the implementation of the learning tasks.

As a deterrent to cross-racial teaching and learning, it should be given high priority by those of us seriously concerned with improved achievement of all learners but because it is a difficult item to assess and to deal with, neither pre-service or in-service programs for teachers tend to attack it. It is difficult because direct attention to it requires that well-learned beliefs, feelings, emotions and behaviors become open to question and to diagnosis. The profession of teaching has not developed and utilized a systematic approach to this kind of factor when accepting or rejecting candidates for teacher education and once the

teacher is placed in an instructional position with learners, he or she rarely further examined in any aspect. Consequently, the problem of racism in our schools continues to prevail at a very complex level.

How does the concept of racism reflect itself in the school setting? Generally, it begins at a very subtle level and teachers (including administrators) functioning honestly on the strength of their beliefs identify learning goals on the basis of a mono-listic value system. The very objectives of instruction and administration often suggest that persons whom teachers expect to fail in the school setting are those of minority groups. Teacher attitudes reflect over racism in classes, and administrators exercise it in personnel selection and policy implementation. Secondly, teachers seem unable to understand or empathize with the differentiated behavioral system of the impoverished learner.

Additionally, the teacher sees almost all learner behavior as undesirable according to the teacher's value system. Far too often when the teacher is white and the learners are predominantly Black, the teacher sees his or her function as primarily custodial and disciplinary. Such perception, often reflecting racism, further restricts the movement toward the goals of productive teaching and learning. Can racism exist when the teacher is Black and the learners are predominantly white? Yes it can but frequently the Black teacher lacks the self-confidence to function at the professional level in the face of racist behavior on the part of his students. It cannot be overlooked that some Black teachers, misinterpreting their teacher roles, attempt to relieve their racial frustrations by behaving in punitive ways with White learners. The quantity of such instances, however, is considerably small compared to the reverse basically because of the number of Black teachers regularly assigned to predominantly White learners.

One example of a problem in a recently desegregated system involved the Black teacher who was told by his fourth grade student that, "My mommy says I

don't have to do what you say because you're a nigger." Such a statement made before the class group can be cause for emotionally destroying the teacher in his instructional efforts or it can become a golden opportunity to teach a new kind of lesson in acceptance and understanding of people who are different from one's self. The emotional strenght and health of the teacher, however, must be a major factor in such cases and it is suggested that every effort to be made to alter this essentially racist attitude which the learner has brought to the class. The teacher who passes up the opportunity to help that pupil misses much of the challenge and joy of teaching for posterity. The learner may have been told this by her parents or she might have been creating such a concept within her own mind. But it is the task of the teacher in the recently desegregated school who must help American education move through the crisis of such social change. No other generation of teachers will be called upon to help eradicate racism at the level which today's teachers are being called upon and while it is a challenging and demanding task, each teacher faced with the instructional responsibility of serving an interracial class should view it as an opportunity to help with the most pressing set of obstacles to the development of young people known to man (social acceptance of each other).

Another example of behavior which the minority teacher in the desegregated situation faced recently involved the senior high school male learner who on the second day of class, went to the teacher and said, "My father says I can't take this course--because I won't learn anything, anyway." The tone of voice used and the implication of this statement was interpreted by the minority teacher to suggest a lack of faith in the teacher's competence. One must always ask himself whether the pupil used his father's name in vain and whether there were other underlying causes for such a response. But it was perceived by the teacher as a racist overture retained that effect. What might the minority teacher do under

such circumstances? Perhaps the worst thing to do would be to attempt to debate her competence either with the learner or with the father of the learner. One of the more appropriate things to do would be to express regret that the learner probably will not have the personal experience of assessing the competence for himself and proceed to release the student. Then discharge her teaching responsibilities with the remaining students in such a manner that many of them will extol her competency for her. In other words, all teachers (Black and White) are continually open to student appraisal. When the teacher performs productively and utilizes well-developed human relations skills in the process, he or she does not have to worry about advertising his competency. The students will do it for you.

The same factors work when the non-minority teacher is assigned to a predominantly Black class in recently desegregated districts. One young male teacher was assigned to such a class in an urban school serving hundreds of impoverished minority secondary students. These students had a reputation for rejecting any White teacher or administrator who dared to accept an assignment with them. The young teacher, who happened to be a social studies teacher, elected to accept the challenge and armed himself with every ounce of optimism available on tackling the assignment. Not only did he behave in ways which communicated to these students that he believed in them, but he employed the instructional strategies which allowed learners to explore, question, investigate, assume leadership roles, and examine some of the most pertinent and urgent social problems facing those learners within the framework of social studies instruction. But first, it was his belief in the educability and worth of the individual student which caused his behavior to be acceptable to the learners. His reputation as an effective cross-racial teacher has spread throughout the area in which he teaches and he works in a district which employs more than 12,000 teachers. His learners

extolled his teaching proficiency.

Racism defeats the realization of the most desired educational goals and every teacher must actively seek to reduce its presence in any teaching-learning situation. Effective teaching of lea ners from limited-income familes (as well as of those who are not) demands that teachers move the framework from racism to one of multi-cultural exploration, of an open learning environment and of relevant experiences. We cannot separate the nature of a developing learner from the nature of a rapidly changing society. Racism dictates systematic exclusion of some learners from a variety of activities which enhance educational growth. The lack of an opportunity to know, to work with and to understand people who are different from one's self reduces the realization of the individual's full potential as a human being. Racially-mixed schooling provides the framework within which such opportunities can exist.

But why would any teacher or learner or administrator allow racism to exist in a school setting? There are many reasons but one of the primary reasons is the failure to recognize its presence. Though it is a sad admission, many people who exhibit racist behavior are unaware that their behavior is communicating that racism. Subtle statements, often made in jest, as well as the inconsistency of openness in relating to racially different faculty and students, constantly display these deeply ingrained beliefs. Secondly, these beliefs sometimes help an inadequate person feel more adequate. Some people must frequently remind themselves that they are "better than" others because they feel the need to use this assumption for supporting their weakening egos. Others retain racist attitudes because they are convenient objects on which to place blame for economic inadequacy. This is why many low-income persons are among the most determined exhibitors of racist behavior. To be sure, these racist feelings are implemented through discriminatory practices which detract from the social and academic development of thousands of learners.

Cross Racial Personnel Assignment

One of the most flagrant violations of professional behavior in education occurs during the assignment and reassignment of personnel in schools. When one reviews the Code of Ethics of the Education Profession, it is noted that the first principle involves commitment to the student. The truly professional teacher (curriculum worker and administrator) places the welfare and development of learners (all learners) above other concerns even within the profession. Many personnel decisions in recently desegregated systems placed ineffective teachers with the most impoverished learners. The ineffective teacher was one who was re-assigned unwillingly in the effort to achieve certain levels of racial balance. The unwillingness of the teacher to accept re-assignment might have been based on several reasons but the selection process often left much to be desired. The criteria on which the selections were made for re-assignment in certain sections of the country included no real assessment of teacher competence, teacher attitude, or specific training for the instruction of learners with learning difficulties as are found among many learners from limited-income families.

Administrators reached many of these decisions without so much as a brief conference with the teacher in a newly desegregated school, whether the teacher was leaving that school or coming into the faculty. If additional care had been taken in working to decrease the unwillingness of the teacher to be re-assigned to a cross-racial setting, the teaching performances would yield much more productive learning. Some teachers actually refused to be re-assigned and preferred to resign their teaching positions in favor of other kinds of employment. Perhaps these teachers were aware that they were so completely unprepared to work with learners who were racially and economically different from themselves that they felt they would do more harm than good. We don't know. But to many

knowledgeable observers, the refusal was a deliberate rejection of bi-racial, multi-ethnic schools across the country. We question the teacher's original commitment to teaching.

We are no longer facing a critical teacher shortage in America and the quality of the teacher will become more and more of a factor in selection and placement. As in any endeavor, when supply exceeds demand, the selection process becomes more refined. We predict that in the future, serious effort will be taken to rectify discriminatory practices in employment and assignment of teachers within given school systems.

Another factor which cannot go unnoticed is the statistical data on the racial component of teachers employed in sections of the country where racial integration has been attempted in recent years. This particularly involves the personnel decisions regarding Black teachers. Over the past few years, the number of Black teachers employed in several states had decreased during the period of desegregation efforts, but the number of Black students has not decreased. During the same period, data shows that the number of Caucasian teachers employed in these same states has increased sharply. There could be many factors which account for these numbers but when one also knows that the Department of Health, Education, and Welfare and the National Education Association were constantly receiving letters of grievance from Black teachers indicating discriminatory practices in the retention and assignment of teaching personnel, one wonders if there isn't some relationship to the two factors. For instance, some Black teachers who had been employed in school districts for up to fifteen years were relieved of their teaching duties and not re-assigned in any capacity. The reasons, when they were given by school districts, usually involve some reference to the teacher's competency. Does this mean that these districts were unaware of the alleged incompetence prior to the mandates for

desegregation? In far too many of these instances, overtones of racism enter the picture. Does desegregation ever mean that teaching staffs must be decreased? Does desegregation mean systematic failure to retain the services of Black (and other minority) teachers? The administrative allocation of educational resources comes under strong questioning when these factors are reviewed. Some persons have referred to this kind of practice as institutional racism--meaning that the educational institution or system contributes to the assumed superiority of the dominant racial group. Will there continue to be guardians of such a system?

Personnel selection and assignment are major tasks in any program and those who professionally discharge these responsibilities are to be commended for the smooth way in which it can be accomplished. But far too many discrepancies exist in American education to overlook their impact.

But what has all this to do with bringing relevance to curricular and instructional efforts for children from limited-income families? No longer can we discuss, describe, diagnose and rectify the ills of education for poor children as though the school is an isolated social system. Practically everything we do in schools must become related to the total problems and characteristics of the society at large. This also means changing the approach, the content, the priorities and the objectives of school effort in order to meet the needs of the clients (students). This is not a strange idea. America has always turned to its schools for help in solving problems of national crisis. The education of impoverished and minority learners leads the list of national crises at the present time. No other area of concern is more urgent. The issues discussed related to racial integration suggest that the instruction for learners (of all races), must be modified so that schools deal with the basic issues of life as we know it today. Far too many guidelines, policies, rules and

regulations are issued from a political standpoint rather than an educational one. One of the major hurdles in reaching the level of relevancy so desired is the application of racist decisions in too many schools. Racism, then, must be attacked openly and vigorously through personnel decisions, administrative directives, teacher performance, curriculum revision, student-oriented activities and community participation. In efforts to overcome overt and subtle racism in the schools, those who really believe in the democratic way of life for all people must assume the leadership in eradicating the ills which we now know.

Further, when a teacher begins to work with learners, all the frustrations of the system which he or she represents come to bear in the work of the class. The knowledge of achievement as well as the use of achievement data reflect a great deal about one's commitment and it is through one's commitment that irrelevance is replaced with economic and academic relevance. Who arranges the list of priorities to which a teacher must adhere in his work with learners? What teachers believe to be most important in life, in school, and in every other framework will dictate the direction of their efforts. This is why we consider it crucially important to encourage teachers to examine what they believe, to analyze their own behaivor, and to assess the feelings and responses of learners from limited-income families at frequent intervals. It would seem that the highest priorities would be designed for the alleviation of the greatest deprivation (economic, social) but rarely, it seems, do we find that to be the case.

WHITE LEARNERS FROM LIMITED-INCOME FAMILIES

The learner from a limited-income family who happens to be Caucasian becomes even more limited when in his or her role as educational client-- they are short-changed in the receipt of education that is multi-cultural and in the receipt of

balanced cross-racial human relations. Those teachers (both minority teachers and non-minority teachers) who are unwilling to teach white children from limited-income families because they feel it is degrading to do so, have by their own admission of unwillingness-- removed themselves from the ranks of the truly professional teacher for modern times. White children from economically-poor families often are confused by the combination of cross-racial relations and limited economic resources. Their own impoverished state (limited income, limited experiences) may be a major factor in their development of general perception.

The child may not experience racial discrimination, but the economic discrimination may be equally as detrimental. Poor white children have been the objects of name-calling and related behaviors which make them acutely aware of their economic differences from many others. In schools attempting racial integration, these forces become even greater for the white child from the limited-income family. Our quest for social stratification anf for self-perceived social status-- sometimes make it difficult for us to deliver the highest quality instructional service to the economically poor. Like minority children, they need the most wholesome educational experience possible-- which will also teach them the equality of all human beings while they learn the critical consumer skills which provide a foundation for movement from their impoverished state.

The American school cannot afford to do any less than provide the most critical skills in an atmosphere where cross-racial tolerance grows to cross-racial appreciation. The institution of the school must see itself as an agent of social as well as academic change. We believe that the school is fully capable of providing leadership for a changing society by reflecting that change within its institution both for the white child and for the minority child.

One political observer has noted that institutions seldom change within themselves--that change must be instituted from elsewhere. Must this also be true of educational practices in American public schools? Already we have increasing numbers of critics of the American school raising their voices loud and clear about the dissatisfaction of the educational product (the learner). Must we allow these persons to attack professional educators to the point of initiating the kinds of changes which we know are essential?

A Further Observation on Interracial Faculties

Teachers of children from limited-income families, particularly those in recently desegregated schools, must seek to establish and maintain warm, professional relationships within the working staff as well as with others associated with the school, regardless of the racial components of faculties. One of the major difficulties seen in schools recently attempting racial integration is the emergence of conflict in role perceptions because teachers do not see themselves as complimentary to each other. In any social system (and the school is a social system), roles can be defined as expectations and these expectations are generated by the function of the institution. The interaction of personality and role expectations must yield the kind of bi-racial, multi-ethnic team effort which provides a unified effort to teach poor children of all races.

In racially desegregated schools, both teachers and learners of different racial or ethnic groups must assume and perceive roles of equal status. They must study together, work together, and relate to each other so that the personal worth of each individual is enhanced. There must be purposeful effort to enter situations which help to break down existing stereotypes. This kind of faculty involvement and performance requires the type of person who is self-confident and creative and who can get respect without demanding it. He must be able to

see himself as a valuable team member equal in competence to all other team members and sharing a common interest in improved academic performance in a more wholesome educative environment.

The faculty must see themselves as an organized group whose primary purposes include adequately educating poor children and assisting in the peaceful desegregation of public schools. Every plan, activity and function must be committed to the reduction of isolation among learners with academic and economic difficulties and must seek to re-new and maintain enthusiasm in the school's program. In other words, the school must become a "great place to be" for both teachers and learners. Not only are we concerned with cross-racial human relations skills which permit people to keep destructive conflict at a minimum, but teachers in a bi-racial, multi-ethnic school must learn to see some conflict as a productive ingredient to school operation. The incorporation of prescribed levels of conflict (conflict of ideas, creative energies) in the teaching-learning situation is deemed healthy for all learners, but especially for those from limited-income families. The opportunity to develop the skills which are necessary in coming to grips with the issues that learners face in their own neighborhoods and communities can no longer be absent from the curricular program.

Teachers must function this way themselves before they can provide a setting in which learners can function that way. The kind of teacher who is likely to be most successful in schools serving poor children will allow pupils to be free to explore alternatives without the fear of making mistakes and feeling foolish. The teaching role is not seen as a dictator's role. Errors become a source of information instead of cause for alarm and punishment.

The most highly skilled teacher cares and cares passionately about people--not just white people, not just Black people, but about all people. He sees

himself as personally responsible for the preservation and enhancement of human life. Sharing the adventure of learning becomes a source of real satisfaction and fulfillment for him because he knows that the real rewards of teaching are affective and emotional. He recognizes that learners, regardless of racial or ethnic identity, are all human beings complete with feelings that influence how they act and respond. In order to get the kind of response which our research and our experience indicate would yield the broad goals of American education, teachers must become personally accountable for their efforts in instruction. Such a teacher would never attempt to direct learning or conduct a class in any form if he was unprepared and if he has not carefully thought through the day's work. Special effort must be taken in trying to understand whatever behavior occurs.

A Closing Note of Optimism

None of these ideas and issues would warrant our attention if there wasn't confidence in a multiethnic, multi-racial American way of life and its capability to bring about fundamental human changes. America has formally committed itself to the education of all the children of all the people. Racial integration refers to the way in which this education is to be delivered. Educating the child from limited-income families refer to the extent to which the American school can serve economic diversity and cultural difference. Cross-racial teaching and learning is a reality in this decade and will continue to do so. Our social system will not retrogress along those lines. To be sure, there are well-trained, highly-skilled teachers in amny schools who can offer education that is multi-cultural in humanistic ways. They are making great contributions to the education of learners from limited-income families, whether in racially desegregated schools or not. It is further satisfying to observe the many young teachers and

teacher-candidates who are struggling with their own ideas and value systems regarding racial diversity and economic differences reflected in American schooling.

The sharing of points included here implies that a greater awareness of the elements of teacher responsibility in schools attempting racial integration contributes to a more effective and more functional school experience for all. It is to this end that all educators (teachers, teacher-aides, principals, other administrators, librarians, counselors, supporting staff) must address themselves. It is possible to educate the American child in racially-integrated schools whether that child is from a limited-income family or otherwise. Once the schools are desegregated, then most of education's energies must go toward racial integration in schooling and toward more productive teaching of children from limited-income families.

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